



Editorial Style Guide

Milwaukee County Brand & Visual Identity

This style guide aims to help you, other county employees, communications staff and consultants use consistent editorial style. These resources will also help us write accurately, clearly and concisely, enhancing credibility with our citizens, patrons and clients.

These resources benefit our readers every time they encounter documents we produce for them. The suggestions on word usage, concise writing and plain language aim to aid people who read at all levels of time, interest and literacy (including readers with limited English proficiency and/or who use English as a second language).

These references also help Milwaukee County stakeholders use time effectively and efficiently by answering many questions that arise when we're writing.

Use this guide as your first reference when you have questions about abbreviations, capitalization, computer terms, grammar, the internet, numbers, organizational terminology, punctuation, spelling and word usage. Use the tips to answer questions when you're writing about Milwaukee County and its departments, divisions, and offices and their personnel, plans, projects and programs.

Please follow these writing standards in all external and internal county materials for broad public or employee use. Affected county documents include (but are not limited to) articles, brochures, business correspondence, displays, official email messages, fliers, manuals, memos, newsletters, news releases, pamphlets, presentations, reports and webpages and web content. Documents produced by consultants for Milwaukee County also should follow these standards.

These references note some exceptions or variations for some rules that might arise in county correspondence or specific instances. Style exceptions might be appropriate for limited space in charts, tables, maps and signs and for some established standards and practices in advertising copy, technical publications, environmental reports and legal documents.

If used, style exceptions should be applied consistently within the document and in all related documents. Clarity and accuracy build trust — and are thus high priority in all Milwaukee County documents.

Standards in the style manual follow preferences of The Associated Press Stylebook and other respected style manuals. The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Gregg Reference Manual, Chicago Manual of Style and other references are consulted when needed. The AP Stylebook is available in print and for a subscription fee on the internet at www.apstylebook.com. For writing questions not answered in county references, check the AP Stylebook.

We do not expect everyone to become experts on style, grammar and usage. Use this guide as a tool to develop your skills. If you have comments, questions or suggestions about how this manual can be more useful, please contact Graphic Communications Coordinator Jim Lautenbach at (414) 278-5092 or jim.lautenbach@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

The county style manual is updated periodically as needed. Note the version number and date on the last page.

If you notice any areas of discrepancy — or would like to suggest an addition or modification to the Editorial Style Guide, please contact Graphic Communications Coordinator Jim Lautenbach at (414) 278-5092 or jim.lautenbach@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

Also available:

Milwaukee County Plain-Language Writing Guide — Plain language (or plain English) is an approach to writing that concentrates on the needs of your readers. It's an approach ideal for public sector employees who write to and for Milwaukee County taxpayers, residents and other clients and patrons. It helps us communicate with people who read at all levels of time, interest, and literacy and readers with limited English proficiency. Plain language principles can help you write clearly and concisely. [ADD LINK](#)

Milwaukee County Graphic Standards Reference Guide — [ADD LINK](#)

The Editorial Style Guide has been released in DRAFT version.

A review process is currently underway, and updates and modifications will be made. If you see any discrepancies or areas of confusion within the DRAFT, please contact Graphic Communications Coordinator Jim Lautenbach at (414) 278-5092 or jim.lautenbach@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

abbreviations & acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms must benefit your readers by making written text simpler and less cumbersome. Do not use an abbreviation or acronym that would confuse your readers. When in doubt, spell it out.

Never abbreviate *County* or *county*.

Always spell out terms, common names and the complete proper name of an organization, project, process, program or document the first time you use them and repeat the complete term or name at the beginning of sections in longer documents. Although abbreviations or acronyms are capitalized for some common or generic nouns and terms, lowercase the spelled-out form. See **capitalization**.

If an abbreviation or acronym of the term or name would not be clear on second reference, avoid using it. Instead, use a shortened version of the name or a generic word, such as *the committee*, *the department*, *the division* or *the company*.

If you don't use an abbreviation or acronym later in a document, don't provide the abbreviation or acronym after first spelling it out.

If the meaning is clear to readers or explained elsewhere in a document, abbreviations and acronyms may be used in headlines and headings.

If the meaning is clear, abbreviations and acronyms may be used in charts, tables, maps and certain types of technical writing. See **file name acronyms**.

Acronyms: When each letter is pronounced in most acronyms, capitalize every letter. Capitalize only the first letter in most acronyms with more than six letters. Omit periods in most acronyms unless the result would spell an unrelated word. Check this style manual or your dictionary for exceptions to these guidelines. The word *the* is unnecessary before acronyms pronounced as words instead of letter by letter: *OSHA*, *CAD*.

Abbreviations: Put a period after each letter in most two-letter abbreviations: *U.N.*, *U.S.*, *M.A.* Leave out periods in most abbreviations unless the result would spell an unrelated word: *M.A.N. built the buses*. When each letter is pronounced in longer abbreviations, capitalize every letter but don't include periods: *NBC*, *EIS*, *NEA*. Check this style manual or your dictionary for exceptions to these guidelines. Use only one period when a sentence ends with an abbreviation that includes periods. Use *the* before abbreviations only when you would use *the* before the full name: *the ESA*, *the state DOT*, *IBM*.

Most common plural abbreviations are formed by adding an *s*: *UFOs*, *IOUs*, *ABCs*, *TVs*. Sometimes, an apostrophe may precede the *s*: when the abbreviation has internal periods (*M.A.'s*, *M.B.A.'s*, *Ph.D.'s*), when the abbreviation is a single letter (*A's*, *S's*) and when the abbreviation would be confusing if only the *s* were added (*OWS's* instead of *OWSs*). In the last example, if your readers might misinterpret an abbreviation like *OWS's* as showing possession, leave out the apostrophe.

academic degrees, titles

Avoid abbreviations for degrees; instead, use a phrase such as *Sally Forth, who has a doctorate in microbiology, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree*. Do not capitalize the type of degree or major, except for proper nouns like *English*. If using abbreviations such as *B.A.*, *M.A.* or *Ph.D.*, put them after a full name, capitalize, include periods, and set off with commas: *Charlie McCarthy, Ph.D., spoke*. (Exception: do not use periods in professional initials on county business cards.)

Also, capitalize and spell out titles like *director* when they precede a name, but don't capitalize modifiers: *initiative Director Bill Chamberlain*. Lowercase elsewhere: *Bill Chamberlain, initiative director*.

ADA

See **Americans with Disabilities Act**.

addresses

Use numerals for an address number: *She lives at 3456 W. Wells St.*

Spell out and capitalize *First* through *Ninth* in addresses when used as a street name: *The bus drove down Fourth Avenue.* Use numerals with two letters for *10th* and above: *He lives at 1234 56th Ave. S.* Don't use superscript: *56th*, not *56th*.

Abbreviate compass points (*N.W.*, *S.*, etc.; all caps, with periods) in a numbered address: *The building is at 543 N.W. 252nd St.* Don't abbreviate *South* as *So*. The periods for abbreviated compass points in numbered addresses may be omitted in maps, charts and tables.

Abbreviate only *avenue*, *boulevard* and *street* (as *Ave.*, *Blvd.* and *St.*) in a numbered address: *King Street Center is at 201 S. Jackson St.* Also, abbreviate *avenue*, *boulevard* and *street* when using intersections to identify the location of department facilities: *They used the park-and-ride lot at Fifth Ave. N.E. and N.E. 145th St.* But: *King Street Center is at 201 S. Jackson St. on Second Avenue.* Spell out other street designations.

Spell out and capitalize words such as *alley*, *drive*, *road*, *way* and *terrace* when part of an address or name: *He worked on Holman Road Northwest and lived at 200 Holman Road N.W.* Lowercase them when used alone or in plural forms: *The crew will repave Holman and Somerset roads.*

When first used without a number, always spell out and capitalize the full name of a street, avenue, road or boulevard: *He lived on South Washington Street.* Also spell out compass points (*South*, *Northwest*, etc.) if omitting the number: *The building is on Northwest 252nd Street.*

Compass points and common names (*Street*, *Avenue*, etc.) may be left off in later references if the location is clear.

Lowercase *street*, *avenue*, *boulevard* or *road* and the compass point when using the plural form: *The property is between 75th and 78th avenues northwest on Northwest 238th Street.* But don't lowercase those words when the form is not plural: *You can catch a bus on Second or Third Avenue.* Also, lowercase and spell out *street*, *avenue*, *boulevard* or *road* when used alone: *He drove down the tree-lined boulevard.*

Use a ZIP code in mailing addresses, but don't include a ZIP code when giving the address of a meeting or other event. See **ZIP code**.

For *post office boxes*, use periods in the abbreviation *P.O.* when giving *P.O. Box* numbers: *P.O. Box 4311.* Also, lowercase *post office* in all uses.

ages

Use a numeral when stating the age of a human being or other animal in years. When using ages as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun, use hyphens: *A 7-year-old girl.* *The girl is 7 years old.* *The workshop is for 10-year-olds.* *The man is in his 20s* (also, no apostrophe). *Classes are for children 5 to 15 years of age.* Acceptable: *The law is 8 years old.* This rule is one of the exceptions to the general rule for **numbers**.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Spell out and capitalize on first reference. *ADA* (all caps, no periods) may be used on later references.

Include a version of the following statements on all printed material prepared for distribution to the public and employees:

Available in an alternative format upon request.
Contact the Office for Persons with Disabilities:
(414) 278-3930 (voice) | (414) 278-3939 (fax) | 711 (TRS)

Alternative Formats Upon Request
(414) 278-3930 (voice) | (414) 278-3939 (fax) | 711 (TRS)

This information is available in alternative formats upon request at (414) 278-3930 (voice) or 711 (TRS).

To request this information in alternative formats for people with disabilities, call (414) 278-3930 (voice) or TRS: 711.

To request this information in alternative formats or to request reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, call (414) 278-3930 (voice) or 711 (TRS).

The statement should be printed in black (not colored) ink in an easy-to-read non-italic typeface such as Arial or Helvetica of at least 14 points. White lettering on black is also acceptable. Do not hyphenate any words in the phrase. Neither boldfaced type nor a box around the statement is required.

ampersand (&) vs. “and”

As a general rule, an ampersand should not be used to replace the word “and” in body copy. However, an ampersand can replace “and” in headlines, lists, charts and tables.

Use the ampersand when a company uses it as part of its full name, as may be shown on its letterhead.

apostrophe (’)

This punctuation mark does four things. First, it often shows possession: *Dan Lindler’s appointment*. Second, it frequently marks the omission of letters — including the formation of contractions: *finger lickin’ good, he’ll, won’t*.

Third, it is used in abbreviations of years and decades: *the class of ’68, the ’90s*. It’s not used, however, in plurals of decades: *the ’70s, the 1980s*.

And fourth, it sometimes marks the plural of single letters and abbreviations with internal punctuation: *Dot your i’s. She got straight A’s on her report card*.

brackets ([])

Avoid using in general copy — use commas, dashes or parentheses instead.

But use purposely for paraphrasing quoted content or clarifying. In quotations, brackets may be used to show that the words in brackets were added or changed by the editor to clarify the meaning. Avoid altering quotations. If a speaker’s words are clear and concise, use the full quotation. If cumbersome language can be paraphrased fairly, use an indirect construction. *“We support the [Metropolitan King County] council’s decision,” she said.*

Square brackets also may be used infrequently to insert words into a statement that’s already enclosed in parentheses.

building

Capitalize when part of a proper name: *The Exchange Building is on Second Avenue*. Lowercase when it stands alone: *They left the building after the meeting*. Do not abbreviate unless necessary for space considerations in charts and tables.

bulleted list

Use bullets, proper indenting and periods at the end of each option.

Example of the proper format for a bulleted list:

- *Option one.*

- Option two.
- Option three.

capitalization

Avoid unnecessary capitalization. Begin proper nouns, sentences, headings and the important words in publication titles with capital letters. A proper noun is the formal, official, unique or popular name of a specific person, place or thing. A common noun, lowercased, is the name of a general class of people, places or things. A common noun may also be used to identify a particular person, place or thing, typically on second reference, also lowercased: *Communications Manager Lottie Press, the communications manager; Lake Michigan, the lake; Webster's New World Dictionary, the dictionary; the 2018 Milwaukee County Recommended Budget, the recommended budget.*

As guidance, it's helpful to keep in mind: you capitalize the title of a book, but you don't capitalize "Book."

Excessive capitalization for other purposes, such as highlighting words or stressing their importance, impedes reading and reverses the intended effect. Do not capitalize the first letter of a word (or words in a phrase) simply to highlight it or to express its importance. Check this guide or an online style manual for a particular word, phrase or type of word or phrase. If not listed there, consult another style manual or your dictionary. And if still in doubt, defer to lowercase.

For capitalization guidelines specific to Milwaukee County, check individual items in the county style manual or see **Milwaukee County, Milwaukee County departments & divisions, Milwaukee County facilities.**

Follow differing capitalization styles used in government acts, amendments, bills, charters, constitutions, laws, motions, ordinances, resolutions and statutes only when quoting them directly. Also see **titles**.

Capitalization of abbreviations and acronyms varies. For guidance, see **abbreviations & acronyms**, entries in this style guide for specific words and terms, or your dictionary. Although the abbreviation or acronym for some common or generic nouns and terms may be capitalized, lowercase the spelled-out form; for example: *EIS, environmental impact statement.*

Capitalize the first word of every sentence, heading and headline, including quoted statements and direct questions.

Capitalize proper nouns that specifically identify a person, place or thing, unless a person, business or organization requests a lowercase first letter. If a name begins with a lowercase letter, capitalize the first letter of the name at the beginning of sentences and headlines.

Capitalize common nouns when they're part of the full name for a person, place or thing. But lowercase common nouns when they're used alone in later references. Examples: *Exchange Building, the building; City of Seattle, the city; Boeing Co., the company; Department on Aging, the department; Webster's New World Dictionary, the dictionary; the Human Resources Division, the division; Washington Island, the island; Lake Michigan, the lake; Cascade Mountains, the mountains; Lincoln Park, the park; West Point Treatment Plant, the plant; Kinnickinnic River, the river; the Brightwater Siting Project, the project; Northgate Shopping Center, the shopping center; UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena, the arena; Wells Street, the street; The Pabst Theater, the theater; Marquette University, the university; Milwaukee County Zoo, the zoo.*

Lowercase the plural form of a common noun when listing more than one proper name: *Democratic and Republican parties, Wells and Mason streets, routes 15 and 18, 108th and 110th avenues.* But don't lowercase the common nouns when the form is not plural: *She can catch the bus on First or Second Avenue.*

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, races, tribes, etc.: *African American, American Indians, Arab, Asian, Jewish, Latino, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Ho-Chunk*. Lowercase *black, white*, etc.

For capitalization guidelines specific to Milwaukee County and its departments and divisions, check individual items in the county style manual or see the items below. Also see **county**:

- **advisory committees** Spell out and capitalize the full name of special committees, task forces and commissions: *Lakefront Development Advisory Committee, Parks Advisory Commission, Task Force on Pension Funding & Alternatives, Milwaukee County Cultural Artistic & Musical Programming Advisory Council, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Study Committee*. Refer to *the committee, the task force, the commission* (preferred) on later references or abbreviate if abbreviation or acronym (all caps, no periods) is widely known: *CAMPAC, SEWRPC*.
- **County Board committees** On first reference, spell out and capitalize the full name of the committees of the Milwaukee County Board. The standing committees are the *Committee of the Whole; Economic and Community Development Committee; Finance and Audit Committee; Health and Human Needs Committee; Intergovernmental Relations Committee; Judiciary, Safety and General Services Committee; Parks, Energy and Environmental Committee; Personnel Committee; and Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee*. Lowercase *committee* when it stands alone: *The committee voted to adopt the measure*.
- **County Executive** Always capitalize *Milwaukee County Executive* and *County Executive* before a name and when used in place of the officeholder's name: *County Executive Chris Abele will be speaking. The County Executive will be speaking*. See **independently elected officials** (below); **Milwaukee County Executive**.
- **facilities** Capitalize the official proper name of all Milwaukee County facilities: *Milwaukee County Courthouse, Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex, Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center*. But lowercase common noun descriptions of facilities: *the courthouse, the park-and-ride lot, the transit center, the treatment plant, the pump station*. See **Milwaukee County facilities**.

When using part of a facility's name, capitalize only the proper noun. Lowercase the common nouns and adjectives when shortening the name: *East Base, the transit base, the base; West Point Treatment Plant, the West Point plant, the treatment plant, the plant*. If words are added to a facility name to explain, define or describe the function of the facility, lowercase all common nouns and adjectives in the description: *Lake Union Tunnel*, but the *Lake Union sewage tunnel*. See **courthouse**.

- **independently elected officials** Milwaukee County's independently elected officials are the county executive, supervisors of the Milwaukee County Board, sheriff, district attorney, county clerk, register of deeds, treasurer, comptroller, clerk of circuit court and Circuit Court judges. Capitalize these titles when used immediately before the name of the person holding the office: *Milwaukee County Acting Sheriff Richard Schmidt announced....* Also capitalize these titles if used in place of the officeholder's name: *the Sheriff announced....* Except for correspondence, lowercase the title when it's set off from the officeholder's name by commas: *The acting sheriff, Richard Schmidt, announced...; Richard Schmidt, the acting sheriff, announced....* Also lowercase these titles when used generically without reference to a specific officeholder/person. See

related entries in this section and **Milwaukee County Executive; Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.**

- **job titles and descriptions** Capitalize official job titles only when used immediately before a name: *Department of Administrative Services Director Teig Whaley-Smith; Sustainability Director Gordie Bennett; Architecture, Engineering & Environmental Services Section Director Greg High; Associate Project Manager Sherri Jordan; Highway Maintenance Manager Greg Heisel.* Except in formal business correspondence referring to specific individuals, lowercase titles when they're used alone or set off from a person's name by commas. Capitalize the full name of departments, divisions, sections, offices, units and groups when used with a job title: *Lacey Oldenburg, project management office director in the Information Management Services Division; Joseph Lamers, director of the Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget; Greg High, Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Services Section director; Julie Schroeder, intake court coordinator; Barb Pariseau, senior executive assistant.* Titles may be shortened or modified for clarity. See **County Executive** and **independently elected officials** (above); **Milwaukee County Executive.**
- **Milwaukee County organizational structure** Capitalize the names of all Milwaukee County departments, divisions, sections, offices, units and groups. For example, *Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services, Facilities Management, Transportation Services Section, Office of the District Attorney.* Include the complete name on first reference; for later references, capitalized shortened versions of organizational names — without the words *department, division, section, unit* and *group* — are acceptable: *Health & Human Services, Veterans' Services, District Attorney.* Lowercase *department, division* and so on if they stand alone. See **county, governmental bodies, Milwaukee County.**
- **Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors** Capitalize *Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors* on all references. If the full name of the county is clear, capitalize the short form, *the County Board*, when used in place of the full name. To mitigate confusion with other bodies, avoid using *the Board* alone: Use *The County Board will meet next Thursday* instead of *The Board will meet next Thursday.*

Capitalize *chair* when used as a formal title before the name of a person in a supervisor/board or committee position and when combined with *County Board* in place of the supervisor's name: *Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Chair Theodore Lipscomb Sr., County Board Chair Theodore Lipscomb Sr., Intergovernmental Relations Committee Chair Eddie Cullen; the County Board Chair called the meeting to order, the Intergovernmental Relations Committee Chair adjourned the meeting.* Lowercase *the chair* when it stands alone.

Capitalize *supervisor* when used as a formal title before a person's name and when used in place of the officeholder's name: *Milwaukee County Board Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, County Board Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, Supervisor Dimitrijevic; the Supervisor* (when already referenced) *introduced the speaker.* Whenever possible, defer to Supervisor rather than County Board member, though the latter is acceptable. Lowercase *supervisor* or *board member* when it stands alone after a name: *Dan Sebring, a supervisor, said..., Dan Sebring, a County Board member, said..., Dan Sebring, a board member, said....* The County Board of Supervisors and its supervisors might have other styles for materials they produce. Also see **county, Milwaukee County.**

- **programs, projects, plans and initiatives** Capitalize the full official name of programs, projects, plans and initiatives adopted or

acknowledged formally by the Milwaukee County Executive, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors or an independently elected official. Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase *program*, *project* or *plan* when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name.

cents

For amounts less than a dollar, use figures and spell out and lowercase *cents*. For larger amounts, use the \$ sign and decimal system: *25 cents*, *\$1.01*, *\$4.50*. Do not use zeros if there are no cents: *\$6*, not *\$6.00*. See **dollars**.

charts, tables

Abbreviations not typically used in text are acceptable in charts and graphs because of limited space. But abbreviations must still be clear to the reader and consistently used. Also, charts and graphs should have titles. Capitalize the first letter of proper nouns and key words in the titles and headings of charts and tables. Type styles and formats used in charts should be consistent throughout a publication. When referring to a chart or table in the text, capitalize the word *chart* or *table* and use the numeral: *As Table 4 shows, traffic is increasing.*

cities & towns

Capitalize the names of cities and towns in all uses. Capitalize *city* as part of a proper name: *New York City*, *Kansas City*.

Lowercase *city* when used as an adjective or noun: *the city budget*, *mayor of the city*. Capitalize *city* when it's part of the proper name of a governmental unit: *He worked for the City of Seattle*. Omit the redundant *city of* (or lowercase it) when naming cities in other uses: *They visited Chicago*. *They visited the city of Chicago*. See **county**.

Capitalize well-known names for the sections of a city. Local examples include *Capitol Hill*, *University District*, *Magnolia*, *International District*, *Eastside*, *West Seattle*.

Lowercase general designations such as *south Seattle*. And whenever possible, use more-exact descriptions instead: *Rainier Beach* or *Madrona*, for example, instead of *south Seattle*.

dateline cities The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out and follow the reference to a city, town, village or military base: *The meeting will be held in Green Bay, Wisconsin*. However, no state name is necessary if the city is the same as the dateline or is a "dateline city," a city so well known to be connected to its state that naming the state is unnecessary (for example: *Las Vegas*, *Detroit* or *Milwaukee*). A list of dateline cities that stand alone are:

Atlanta	Indianapolis	Phoenix
Baltimore	Las Vegas	Pittsburgh
Boston	Los Angeles	St. Louis
Chicago	Milwaukee	Salt Lake City
Cincinnati	Minneapolis	San Antonio
Cleveland	Miami	San Diego
Dallas	New Orleans	San Francisco
Denver	New York	Seattle
Honolulu	Oklahoma City	Washington
Houston	Philadelphia	

colon (:

The colon has three main uses, all of which involve pointing the reader toward the words that follow the colon. The colon always follows a complete sentence in these uses. Don't combine a dash and a colon. Put only one space after a colon within a sentence or book title.

The most frequent use is to introduce a list, often after expressions such as *the following* or *as follows*: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed three people to the committee: David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard. The department has scheduled open houses in the following communities: White Center, July 5; Kent, July 6; and Duvall, July 7.* Don't use a colon immediately after a verb. Incorrect: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed: David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard to the committee.* Correct: *Loretta Schwieterman appointed David Allen, Greg Edwards and Jean Rheinhard to the committee.*

Second, the colon can be used to emphasize the word, words or sentence that follows it: *He had only one thing on his mind: flowers. The news was good: No one would be laid off.* When used this way, the colon replaces such words as *that is*, *namely* and *for example*. Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.

Third, use a colon to introduce a quotation longer than one sentence within a paragraph and to end a paragraph that introduces a quotation in the next paragraph. Use a comma, however, to introduce a quotation of one sentence that remains within a paragraph. See **comma**, **quotations**, **quotation marks**.

In addition, use a colon to separate numbers in **times** (7:15 a.m.), to separate a title and subtitle, and after a business salutation (*Dear Mr. Hyde:*).

comma (,)

The following guidelines treat frequent questions about eight essential uses of the comma.

First, use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in a simple series: *The flag is red, white and blue. He would nominate Tom, Dick or Harry.* In general, omit the Oxford/serial comma.

Put a comma before the concluding conjunction in a series, however, if an integral element of the series requires a conjunction: *I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast.*

Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases: *The main points to consider are whether the athletes are skillful enough to compete, whether they have the stamina to endure the training, and whether they have the proper mental attitude.*

Do not put a comma before the first item in a series or after the *and* in a series. In this example, the commas in brackets are incorrect: *The van is[,] economical, roomy, and[,] dependable.*

Second, use a comma to join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction. An independent clause is a group of words that could stand on its own as a complete sentence; it begins with its own subject. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *but*, *and*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so* and *yet*: *The council's Utilities Committee will review the resolution Jan. 12, and the full council is scheduled to act Feb. 11.* Don't create run-on sentences by combining two or more independent clauses with only commas. Either insert conjunctions after the commas or break the clauses into separate sentences. See **sentence length**.

Third, use a comma to separate an introductory phrase from the rest of the sentence: *After graduating from college, he joined the Peace Corps.* It may be omitted after short introductory phrases (less than three words) if no ambiguity would result: *On Thursday the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors will debate the issue.* When in doubt, use the comma, especially when it separates two capitalized words.

Fourth, enclose parenthetical expressions between commas. Parenthetical expressions are word groups that are not essential to the meaning of a sentence. If a parenthetical expression is removed, the sentence would still make sense: *The public health director, who toured the facility last week, will make her recommendations today. They took one of their sons, Travis, to the concert. His wife, Emily, is a middle school teacher.* As shown in the examples, commas always go both before and after a parenthetical expression within a sentence. If you'd prefer to emphasize a parenthetical phrase, put it between **dashes**; you can play down such a phrase by placing it between **parentheses**. Also see **that, which, who whom**.

Use commas to set off a person's hometown when it follows the name: *Rachel Solomon, Seattle, opened a new restaurant.* If using a person's age, set it off by commas: *Tom O'Rourke, 69, opened a new restaurant.*

Do not use commas to set off an essential phrase from the rest of a sentence. Essential phrases are important to the meaning of a sentence: *They took their daughter Jennifer to school. Their son Harold works at Ticketmaster.* (They have more than one daughter and more than one son.)

Fifth, use commas to set off words and phrases such as *however, meanwhile, in fact, in addition, moreover, nevertheless, as a result, thus, therefore, for example, finally* and *in other words*. Usually, place a comma after such expressions when they begin a sentence, and place commas before and after the expressions when they are within a sentence.

Sixth, use commas to separate a series of adjectives equal in rank. If the adjectives could be rearranged without changing the meaning of a sentence or if the word *and* could replace the commas without changing the sense, the adjectives are equal: *A sleek, new car. A thick, black cloud.*

Use no comma when the last adjective before a noun outranks its predecessors because it is an integral element of a noun phrase: *a silver articulated bus.*

Seventh, use a comma to set off a direct one-sentence quotation within a paragraph: *Theodore Roosevelt said, "It's not the critic who counts."* Use a comma, before the second quotation mark, in a quotation followed by attribution: *"No comment," said Jerry Carson.* See **quotations, quotation marks**.

And eighth, use a comma to separate the parts of numbers, dates and addresses. Use a comma for figures higher than 999: *More than 1,000 people attended the event.*

Use commas to set off the year in complete dates: *The department released the report Nov. 16, 2002, for public review.* But don't separate the month from the year when not using a date. *They held their first retreat in January 1994.* See **dates, years**.

Use commas to set off cities from names of states or nations: *She went to Spokane, Washington, to tour the bridge renovation program. He traveled to Paris, France, on vacation.*

composition titles

Capitalize the main words in titles of books, long poems, long musical compositions, magazines, movies, newsletters, newspapers, plays and works of art such as paintings and sculpture. Italicize the names of such works if italic type is available.

Capitalize the main words and enclose in quotation marks the titles of dissertations, essays, lectures, short musical compositions, short poems, short stories, songs, speeches, radio and television programs, articles in periodicals and chapters of books. If the title is part of a sentence, commas and periods go inside the closing quotation mark. Other punctuation, such as the question mark and the exclamation point, goes inside the quotation mark if it's part of the title; if it applies to the entire sentence, it goes outside the quotation mark.

Capitalize — but don't italicize, underline or enclose in quotation marks — the names of brochures, bulletins and reports and catalogs of reference material, such as almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications.

Never underline any title in any instance, in print or in digital copy.

Also see **magazine names, newspapers**.

compound words and modifiers

Compound words are formed differently for different parts of speech. When forming a compound, such as *start up* or *start-up*, first determine the part of speech you want, such as a noun, adjective or verb. Then check the online style manual and your dictionary for the correct spelling. If not listed in either source, follow these guidelines: except for compound nouns formed with a verb and preposition, use two words for unlisted compound nouns: *car stop*. Use a hyphen for unlisted verb-plus-preposition compound nouns: *start-up*. Hyphenate unlisted compound verbs. Though there are exceptions, use a hyphen for most unlisted compound adjectives (or compound modifiers): *rush-hour service*. No hyphen is necessary within a single proper noun (*a Milwaukee County project*), a single expression contained in quotation marks: (*a "better than promised" attitude*), foreign-language phrases (*the ad hoc committee*), percentages (*the 2 percent tax increase*) and dollar amounts (*a \$2 million budget*).

Hyphenate compound modifiers so they don't confuse readers: *The budget includes additional cash-financed projects* (not *cash financed projects*).

contractions

Contractions can speed reading and assure accuracy. They also can soften the tone of your writing by making it more personal and conversational. Contractions, however, may be too informal for some documents. Avoid overusing contractions, especially *I'd* and *he'd*, because they can mean both *I had* and *I would*, *he had* and *he would*.

county

Capitalize when part of a proper name: *Milwaukee County*, *Waukesha County*. Also capitalize the short form, *the County*, if used alone as a proper noun in second references to Milwaukee County government (or another county government): *He attended the community meeting to represent the County. The County is in good financial health. He represented the County's parks department [possessive use of the County].*

Capitalize the full name of county governmental units: *the Milwaukee County Board*, *Milwaukee County Department of Transportation*, *Milwaukee County Facilities Management Division*, *Milwaukee County Office on African American Affairs*. When they stand alone, lowercase *the department*, *the division*, *the office*, etc. Exceptions: Capitalize *County* in *County Board*, *County Executive* and the titles of other elected county officials if used in place of an officeholder's name.

Lowercase *county* when used as an adjective to identify or describe a department, program or other element of Milwaukee County: *The county budget is scheduled for adoption next week. The ordinance affects all county employees. She will contact the county consultant for the project.*

Also lowercase *county* when referring to the geographic entity: *Population is increasing in the county. The county population is increasing*. Lowercase plural combinations: *Milwaukee* and *Waukesha counties*.

Never abbreviate *County* or *county*.

County Board	Capitalize when part of a proper name: <i>The Milwaukee County Board scheduled a meeting</i> . Also capitalize if the name of the county is clear in the context: <i>The County Board passed a motion</i> . Avoid use of <i>the Board</i> alone.
countywide	One word, lowercase.
courthouse	One word. Capitalize when naming the jurisdiction: <i>the Milwaukee County Courthouse, the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building</i> . Otherwise, lowercase: <i>the federal courthouse, the courthouse</i> .
court names	<p>Capitalize the full proper names of courts at all levels. Also capitalize the name if the county name, city name, state name or U.S. is dropped: <i>the U.S. Supreme Court, the Supreme Court; the Wisconsin Court of Appeals, the Court of Appeals; Wisconsin Supreme Court, Supreme Court</i>.</p> <p>For courts identified by a numeral: <i>2nd District Court, 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals</i>.</p>
dash (—)	<p>Long dashes, called <i>em dashes</i>, have three main uses. In these uses, em dashes are usually less formal but more emphatic substitutes for other typical punctuation marks. To maintain the impact of dashes, avoid overusing them.</p> <p>First, use an em dash to amplify, justify or emphasize in the second part of a sentence something in the first part: <i>Riders filled all the buses — the game was over. The road will open Tuesday — if the paving is complete. The project was completed on time, within scope — and under budget.</i></p> <p>Second, use a pair of em dashes to make an emphatic pause or abrupt, parenthetical change in thought within a sentence: <i>The rate increase — coming after 10 months of public discussion — is effective Sept. 1</i>. If you'd prefer to play down such a phrase, consider placing it between parentheses instead, or between commas.</p> <p>Third, use a pair of em dashes to set off a phrase that contains a series of words separated by commas: <i>Leif Hansen described the qualities — intelligence, initiative and assertiveness — that he wanted in a manager.</i></p>
dates	<p>In body copy, abbreviate <i>Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.</i> when used with a specific date: <i>We began operating the pump station Feb. 11, 1994, after 11 months of construction</i>. Spell out the names of months when using a month alone or with a year alone: <i>We began operating the pump station in November 1994</i>. Also, avoid using virgules (or hyphens) with numerals to give dates, especially if your readers could confuse the order of the day and month: <i>2/11/94, 11-16-1993</i>.</p> <p>When not including a specific date, do not separate the month and year with a comma. Including the year is not always necessary in documents with a limited shelf life; however, noting the month and year of publication in an inconspicuous location may be useful. Do not follow numerals used with dates by <i>st, nd, rd</i> or <i>th</i>.</p> <p>Here are examples of the preferred styles for punctuating times and dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes begin <i>Monday, Sept. 2, 2003</i>, in Milwaukee County. [Note commas after the day of the week and the year.] • Classes begin <i>Sept. 2</i> in Milwaukee County. • Classes begin <i>Monday</i> in Milwaukee County. • Classes begin in <i>September</i> countywide.

- The most recent changes took place in *September 2002* in Milwaukee County. [No commas separating the year from the month and the rest of the sentence.]
- The road closure begins at *10 a.m. Monday, June 16, 2003*, near Glendale. [No comma after the time, but note commas after the day of the week and the year.]
- The road closure begins at *10 a.m. Monday* near Glendale.
- The road closure begins at *10 a.m. June 16* near Glendale.
- The road closure will run from *Monday through Friday, June 16 to 20*, except during rush hours.
- The road closure from *June 16 to 20, 2003*, did not disrupt rush-hour traffic.
- The road closure in *June 2003* did not disrupt rush-hour traffic.
- The open house will run from *7:30 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 28*, in the Central Library.

days of the week	Always capitalize days of the week. Do not abbreviate unless needed in a chart or table: <i>Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat</i> (no periods).
decades	Use numerals. Use an apostrophe to show numerals are left out. Add the letter s (with no apostrophe) to show plural: <i>the '60s, the 1980s, the mid-1920s</i> .
decimals	Avoid going beyond two places after the decimal point. For amounts less than 1 percent, put the numeral zero before the decimal point: <i>0.07</i> . See fractions .
dimensions	Use numerals and spell out <i>inches, feet</i> and <i>yards</i> to show depth, height, length and width. Also use numerals and spell out the descriptive word for area, size, volume and other units of measurement: <i>3 acres, 9 gallons</i> . Hyphenate when used as adjectives before a noun: <i>The fish is 9 inches long. The 5-by-8-foot room. The division is building a 13,000-square-foot building. The stream is 2 inches below normal</i> . Use an apostrophe to show feet and quotation marks to show inches (<i>5'8"</i>) only in technical material (never in general body copy). See distances .
directions & regions	<p>Lowercase <i>east, north, southwest, eastern</i>, etc., when they show compass direction. Capitalize the words when they specify well-defined regions: <i>He walked east toward the sunrise. More people are moving to the Northwest</i>.</p> <p>Lowercase directions when combined with a proper name unless used to designate a politically divided nation: <i>western United States, eastern Canada, North Korea</i>.</p> <p>Lowercase compass points when they describe a section of a state, county or city: <i>eastern Wisconsin, north Milwaukee County</i>. But capitalize compass points when part of a proper name: <i>North Dakota</i>. Or when used to show widely known sections: <i>Eastern Washington, Southern California, the Lower East Side of New York</i>. When in doubt, lowercase, or be more precise in naming the geographic area.</p>
director	Capitalize as an official title before a name, but lowercase when it stands alone or comes after a name between commas: <i>Milwaukee County Transit System Managing Director Dan Boehm said...; Dan Boehm, managing director of the</i>

Milwaukee County Transit System, said...

Capitalize the full names of departments and divisions when used with the job title: *Director Kerry Mitchell of the Department of Human Resources; Kerry Mitchell, director of the Department of Human Resources.* See **titles**.

distances

Use numerals for 10 and above. Spell out *one* through *nine*: *The coach traveled four miles. She ran 11 miles.*

districts

When referring to congressional and legislative districts, capitalize district when joined with a number: *the 4th Congressional District, the 21st Legislative District, the 2nd District.* Lowercase *district* whenever it stands alone. Do not spell out the numeral in this usage.

doctor

Readers often identify *doctor* and *Dr.* with physicians. Use *Dr.* on first reference as a formal title before the name of a person with a medical or dental degree. Drop the title before the name in later references. Avoid using *Dr.* before the names of people who hold other types of doctoral degrees, unless the context is clear, such as in academic settings or references to an academic specialty or position. See **academic degrees, titles; titles**.

dollars

Lowercase this word. Beware of accidentally using the word *dollars* and the dollar sign with the same amount: *\$465 dollars*. Except for informal references or amounts without a figure, use the \$ instead: *The book cost \$20. Dollars stopped flowing into Milwaukee County.*

The style for amounts less than \$1 million: \$5, \$36, \$731, \$3,830, \$539,501. For amounts more than \$1 million, use the \$ and numbers up to two decimal places; don't link the numbers and the word with a hyphen: *The project will cost about \$5.25 million. It is worth exactly \$5,248,739. He proposed a \$125 million project.* See **cents, numbers**.

For specific amounts of money, use a singular verb: *They said \$450,580 is needed.* For vague sums of money, use a plural verb: *Millions of dollars were wasted.*

e.g., i.e.

Often confused. The first is the abbreviation for *exempli gratia*, a Latin phrase meaning "for example." The second is the abbreviation for *id est*, a Latin phrase meaning "that is." It introduces a clarification of the words that precede it. Unless the material is scientific or academic, use the simpler English words. Commas or semicolons usually precede both, and commas usually follow both. Phrases containing these abbreviations may be contained in parentheses.

ellipsis (...)

Avoid whenever possible. An ellipsis is usually used to show the deletion of one or more words in condensing quotations, texts and documents. It also shows hesitation or trailing off in a quotation: *"I wonder what I will say after we ..."*

Treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, with three periods and a space on each end. Some software can create an ellipsis that can replace three separate periods.

email

No hyphen, per AP (guideline was updated in 2017; before that *e-mail* (with hyphen) was preferred). Always lowercase unless it begins a sentence, heading or headline.

Acceptable to use as a verb: *He emailed her about the project.* And used alone as a noun, *email* refers to email in bulk. It takes singular verbs and singular pronouns: *He got so much email it overloaded his inbox. All her e-mail was about the construction project.*

Write out e-mail addresses in all lowercase, following web convention: *theodore.roosevelt@whitehouse.gov.* Email addresses are not case-sensitive. Avoid using the @ sign in other ways.

et al.

Abbreviation for *et alibi* or *et alii*, meaning “and elsewhere” or “and others.” Avoid using this abbreviation. Be specific, if possible. It may be used in technical reports as a reference citation: *Light rail uses 34 BTUs of energy (Healy, et al., 1984).*

etc.

Abbreviation for *et cetera*, a Latin phrase meaning “and others,” “and so on,” “and the rest.” It’s usually used for things, not people; the Latin *et al.* is the correct abbreviation for referring to people. But avoid using the abbreviations; use the simpler English words instead.

Also, don’t use *etc.* if introducing a list with *for example* or *such as*. If using *etc.*, set it off with commas at both ends.

exclamation point (!)

Use sparingly and only to express a high degree of surprise, incredulity or other strong emotion. The exclamation point goes within the quotation marks when it applies to the quoted matter only. Use only one space after an exclamation point at the end of a sentence, unless a particular type font and size, such as 10-point Times New Roman, needs two spaces to provide a stronger visual break.

executive

See **Milwaukee County Executive.**

exit numbers

Capitalize them when referring to freeway exits: *Exit 6, Exit 52.*

Fahrenheit

In texts, on first reference use numerals and spell out degrees. Also, spell out and capitalize *Fahrenheit*: *The mercury hit 86 degrees Fahrenheit.* On later reference if the context is clear, the degrees may be dropped and the abbreviation for Fahrenheit used: *The mercury hit 86 F yesterday* (space before and no period after the F). See **temperatures.**

FAQ

Abbreviation for plural *frequently asked questions*; it doesn’t end with a redundant s. Except in headings, spell it out on first reference; FAQ is fine for later references. If referring to more than one FAQ document, use *FAQ pages*, *FAQ listings*, *FAQ documents*, etc.

file name acronyms

Capitalize the acronym for computer file name extensions when used in text; lowercase the acronym when part of a complete document name. Examples: *GIF*, *flowchart.gif*; *JPG* or *JPEG*, *countyexec.jpg* or *countyexec.jpeg*; *PDF*, *newsletter.pdf*; *DOC*, *report.doc*; *HTM* or *HTML*, *index.htm* or *index.html*. The acronym is acceptable on first use if the context is clear; spell it out or explain if it’s not: *Word document* instead of *DOC*.

fractions

Spell out amounts less than *one* in stories, and hyphenate between the words: *one-third*, *three-fourths*. Use numerals for specific amounts larger than one: 5 2/3, 59 5/8. Whenever practical, convert fractions to decimals: 5.5, 43.5, 8.25.

When using fractional characters, use a forward-slash mark (/): 1/8, 1/4, 5/16, 9/10, etc. For mixed numbers, use 1 1/2, 2 5/8, etc. with a full space between the whole number and the fraction. (Do not hyphenate if using a whole number with a fraction.) Some systems may automatically replace some fractions with single-character versions: 1/2 may be replaced by ½. These can be left in the form the system changes them to. (You may also choose to set the options on your system so these replacements are not made. Either way, be consistent.)

With phrases like *three-fourths of X*, the verb agrees with *X*: *Three-fourths of the project is done. Three-fourths of the visitors are from Andorra.*

In charts and tables, always use numerals. Convert to decimals if the amounts involve extensive use of fractions. See **decimals**.

governmental bodies

Capitalize the full, proper names of federal, state and local governmental agencies, departments and offices: *the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, *the state Department of Transportation*, *Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services*, *the county Department on Aging*. Also, capitalize the shortened version if used in rare instances: *the Health and Human Services Department*, *Parks Department*. But lowercase *the department*.

Capitalize the full names and shortened versions of all Milwaukee County departments and other organizational units. See **capitalization**.

government, governmental

Always lowercase the noun *government*, never abbreviate: *county government*, *state government*, *the U.S. government*. Use *governmental* as the adjective: *a governmental agency*.

governor

Abbreviate and capitalize before a name: *Gov.: Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, Gov. Scott Walker*. Lowercase after a name and when standing alone.

headlines, headings

"Down-style" (sentence case) capitalization is preferred for both headlines and headings; that is, capitalize only proper nouns and the first word. The alternative is to capitalize the first word, proper nouns and key words. Capitalize headings and headings consistently within a document, whether you use headlines or headings or both.

Figures should be used for numbers in headlines. If the meaning is clear, abbreviations may be used in headlines and headings. See **abbreviations and acronyms, capitalization, numbers**.

Punctuate headlines like sentences. Some exceptions: Commas may substitute for the word *and*. Use semicolons instead of periods to show sentence breaks within the headline. But put no period after the headline. Use single quotation marks instead of double quotation marks. In attribution, colons may substitute for *said* after the speaker's name (before a statement), and dashes may substitute for *said* before the speaker's name (after a statement). Generally, do not hyphenate words in headlines and headings.

health care

Two words, per AP.

he or she, he/she

In avoiding the outdated use of the generic *he*, *he or she* is much preferred over *he/she*, as are *his or hers* over *his/hers* and *him or her* over *him/her*. Of course, the

pronoun order can be reversed: *she or he, hers or his, her or him*. To avoid overuse of *he or she* and its other forms, use a plural construction: *All participants must supply their own tools* instead of *Each participant must supply his or her own tools*. See **his, his/her**.

highway designations

For highways identified by number, spell out and capitalize on first reference: *Highway 99, U.S. Route 2, Interstate 5, State Route 520*. On second reference, interstates and state routes may be abbreviated. Capitalize and use a hyphen: *I-405, I-5, SR-520*. Don't abbreviate *Highway 99*.

his, his/her

Avoid using the pronoun *his* in generic references or the awkward construction *his/her*. Instead, recast the sentence if possible. Change: *A truck driver should always try to keep his/her composure*. To: *Truck drivers should always try to keep their composure*. See **he or she, he/she**.

home page

Two words. It's the "front" page or main page of a website; it's not synonymous with *webpage* or *website*. See **internet; intranet; World Wide Web, the web, website**.

HTML

Acronym for *HyperText Markup Language*. In stories, describe as *the web programming language known as HTML* on first reference. Lowercase *html* and *htm* in Web addresses. See **World Wide Web, the web, website**.

hyphen (-)

Hyphens link words together. Use a hyphen to form a single idea from two or more words: *She recovered her health. She re-covered the torn seat. He is a small-business man. He is a foreign-car dealer*. Unclear: *He is a small businessman. He is a foreign car dealer*. Also see guidelines at **composition titles, compound words and modifiers, race**.

Do not hyphenate most compound nouns — two or more words that function together as a noun: *Pilot testing is scheduled to begin in May*. But consult this style manual or your dictionary for preferred or commonly accepted terms: *president-elect, sister-in-law, good-for-nothing*.

To avoid ambiguity, use hyphens to link words in compound adjectives (or compound modifiers) before nouns. If you can insert *and* between the modifying words before a noun and make sense of the new construction, you do not have a compound adjective: *And* would make sense in *a sunny, warm day*; *sunny, warm* is not a compound modifier. But *and* would not work in *a well-rounded employee*; *well-rounded* is a compound modifier.

If two or more consecutive words make sense only when understood together as a single idea modifying a noun that follows, hyphenate that compound adjective: *a well-prepared plan, special-interest money, credit-card application, high-frequency sounds, minimum-height requirement, used-record store, 250-square-mile area, 5-ton truck, short-term solution, little-known man, better-qualified woman, long-range plan, know-it-all attitude, pilot-testing schedule*.

Leave out hyphens in compound modifiers only when no reader confusion would result from their omission—or if the modifying words are commonly considered as a unit: *post office box, high school classes*. If necessary, rewrite sentences to avoid stringing together a long, potentially confusing series of modifying adverbs and adjectives before nouns.

Hyphens are unnecessary after the adverb *very* and after all adverbs that end in *ly*: *a very good time, an easily remembered rule, randomly selected addresses*.

Do not hyphenate most compound modifiers if they occur after the noun being modified, even if hyphenating them before the noun: *The plan was well prepared. The man was little known. The woman was better qualified. His boat is 20 feet long, but He has a 20-foot-long boat.*

Here's the form for suspensive hyphenation: *The agenda included a 10- to 15-minute period for questions.*

Hyphenate *co-* when forming nouns, adjectives or verbs that show occupation or status: *co-pilot, co-chairman, co-worker*. See **prefixes** and **suffixes** and separate entries for the most frequently used prefixes and suffixes.

A hyphen is not a dash. For example, the telephone number 414-278-8888 contains hyphens, not dashes. See **dash** for preferred punctuation between phrases. Also see **ranges**.

A hyphen may be used to divide a word at the end of a line, especially to eliminate large gaps at the end of an adjacent line. Here are some guidelines for hyphenation to aid readability and reduce reader confusion:

- Divide words only between syllables, but don't add a hyphen to a word or phrase that already contains a hyphen, such as *decision-maker* or *re-election*. Instead, break the word or phrase at the existing hyphen.
- Don't end more than two consecutive lines with hyphens.
- Don't hyphenate a word at the end of a line unless you can leave a syllable of at least three characters on both the first and second lines. Avoid dividing words with fewer than six letters.
- Don't divide the last word in a line when the second part of the word would be the only "word" on the second line.
- Don't hyphenate abbreviations, contractions, numbers and words in headlines and headings.
- Avoid hyphenating proper nouns.
- Don't hyphenate words that jump from one page to another page.
- Avoid hyphenating words that jump from one column to another column or that jump over a graphic image or photo.

internet

Lowercase in all instances; it has become a generic term (AP Stylebook revised preference to capitalize in 2016). When used as a noun, always preceded by "the." The internet is a decentralized, worldwide network of computers and other devices that can communicate with each other. Don't use *internet* and *World Wide Web* or *web* interchangeably; the web is just one part of the internet. See also **World Wide Web, the web, website**.

See entries below for other Internet, computer and telecommunications terms:

- **cellphone, smartphone** (one word), **cellular phone, cellular telephone** (two words).
- **database** — One word.
- **download** — One word.
- **email** — See entry.
- **FAQ** — Acronym for *frequently asked questions*. See entry.
- **file name acronyms** — Including *DOC, GIF, HTM, JPG* and *PDF*. See entry.
- **home page** — Two words; see entry.

- **HTML** — Acronym for *HyperText Markup Language*. See entry.
- **inbox, outbox** — Each one word, no hyphen.
- **intranet** — See entry.
- **IT** — Abbreviation for *information technology*. Generally spell it out on first reference; *IT* is acceptable on second reference. When referring to the Milwaukee County department that provides information technology services, always use *IMSD (Milwaukee County Information Management Services Division)* on first reference).
- **login/logon/logout; log in, log on, log out** — See entry.
- **online** — One word in all uses.
- **PDF** — See entry.
- **software** — See entry.
- **voicemail** — See entry.
- **World Wide Web, the web, website** — See entry.

intranet

Usually lowercased. While there is one internet, there are many intranets maintained within companies, organizations, government agencies and other computer networks. When naming the unique internal computer network of an organization, *intranet* may be capitalized: *The Milwaukee County Intranet is well-used by employees*. Though not always possible, avoid using *the web* or, especially, *World Wide Web* when referring to an *intranet*. An *intranet page* or *intranet site* can look like an internet page or website, but it's not actually on the World Wide Web. See **email; internet; World Wide Web, the web, website**.

jargon

The technical terminology or specialized vocabulary of a particular activity, class, work or occupational group. Also, obscure and often pretentious language marked by long, unfamiliar words and phrases. Avoid or rewrite. Example: *The biota exhibited a 100 percent mortality response*. Rewrite: *All the fish died*. When jargon is necessary, explain or define the terms likely to be unfamiliar to most readers.

junior, senior

Abbreviate *Jr.* and *Sr.* only with full names. Do not separate the abbreviations from the name with a comma: *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., County Board Chair Theodore Lipscomb Sr.* Similarly, do not use a comma to separate Roman numerals from a person's name: *Larry Moe IV, M.D., will be speaking at the conference. Larry Moe V is in the nursery. Pope John Paul IV.*

legislative districts

See **districts**.

legislative titles

On first reference, use *Rep., Reps., Sen.* and *Sens.* as formal titles before one or more names. Spell out and capitalize those titles before names in business correspondence. Spell out and lowercase those titles in other uses. Add *U.S.* or *state* before a title if necessary to avoid confusion: *U.S. Rep. Warren Jackson spoke with state Sen. Henry Magnuson*. Do not use legislative titles before a name on second reference unless they are part of a direct quotation.

Always use construction *Milwaukee County Supervisor Peggy West* on first reference. When abbreviating for additional references or attributions, the abbreviation is *Sup.: Sup. Peggy West*.

legislature

Capitalize when the name of a state comes before it: *the Wisconsin Legislature*. Keep capitalization when dropping the state name but the reference to the state's legislature is clear: *the state Legislature*, *the Legislature today*.

lists

When listing information in paragraph form, use commas to separate items in the list if the items are brief and have little or no internal punctuation. If the items are complex, separate them with semicolons. To emphasize sequence, order or chronology of list items, each item may be preceded with a number or letter enclosed in parentheses or followed by a period.

Use a colon to introduce a list only if a full sentence or clause precedes it. That sentence would end with *the following*: or *as follows*: or *Here are some examples*: or phrases like that. Don't use the colon after phrases like *The problems include ...* or *The members of the task force are*

Here are two examples:

We think he should (1) increase his administrative skills, (2) pursue additional professional education and (3) increase his production.

You should expect your vendor to do the following: train you in the care of your system; offer regular maintenance, with parts replacement when necessary; and respond promptly to service requests.

When listing information in a column, follow these guidelines:

- End the introduction to the list with a colon if it is a complete sentence, as shown above.
- Capitalize the first word in each item if one or more of the items are complete sentences.
- Don't end list items with a semicolon. And don't use periods or other ending punctuation on items in the list unless one or more of the items are complete sentences.
- Put a period after the final item in all lists.

Avoid ending the introductory phrase with a verb. If that cannot be avoided

- don't use any end punctuation after the introductory phrase before the list (as shown above).
- each item in the list should complete the sentence, beginning with a lowercase letter and ending with a period.
- don't put the word *and* after the second-to-last item in the list.

Here are some guidelines for using bullets and dashes in the list:

- Use bullets before each item in the list when rank or sequence is not important.
- Avoid using an asterisk (*) or dash (—) to represent bullets; most word-processing programs create bullets easily.
- If using numbers to introduce items in a list, don't enclose the numbers in parentheses, but follow each with a period and a space.

Here are some guidelines for using indentations in the list:

- Indent each item in the list if one or more of them develop a complete thought or contain more than one sentence.
- If an item extends beyond one line, align the beginning of each line with the first word of the item after the number or bullet.

Here are some more examples:

The team is studying three alternatives:

- *expanding the existing plant*
- *building a new facility*
- *improving all existing facilities.*

Here's the procedure for typing a three-column table:

1. *Clear tab stops.*
2. *Remove margin stops.*
3. *Find the precise center of the page.*
Set a tab stop at center.

The vendor for your system should

- *train you in the care of your system.*
- *offer regular maintenance,*
with parts replacement when necessary.
- *respond promptly to service requests.*

**login/logon/logout;
log in, log on, log
out**

Use one word (a noun) for the process of gaining access or signing in to a computer system: *Have you been told your login yet?* Use two words (a verb phrase) for describing the action: *She was told to log on to her computer. He logged in to the database program. Everyone was logging off the network.* Verb use is more common. *Log in* and *log on* are interchangeable; so are *log off* and *log out*. Don't *log into* or *log onto*.

magazine names

Capitalize the name. Lowercase *magazine* unless it is part of the formal title. Italicize magazine names if possible. Don't put them in quotation marks. Never underline any title, whether online or in print. See **composition titles**.

manager

Capitalize when used as an official title before a name: *Special Projects Manager Karen Drake*. Lowercase when standing alone or between commas after a name: *Karen Drake, special projects manager, toured the facility. The new manager arrived Monday.*

midnight, noon

Don't capitalize, and don't put a redundant 12 in front of either word. Also, use *midnight* and *noon* instead of vague and potentially misleading *12 a.m.* and *12 p.m.* See **time**.

miles

Use numerals for amounts under 10 in dimensions, formulas and speed: *The site measured 2 miles by 3 miles. The truck slowed to 8 miles per hour. The bus gets 6 miles more per gallon.* Spell out below 10 in distances: *She drove eight miles.*

**miles per gallon;
miles per hour**

The abbreviations *mpg* and *mph* (lowercase, no periods) are acceptable on second reference.

Milwaukee County

Always the preferred format. Never "The County of Milwaukee." Never "the County" on first or sole reference, though "the County" is acceptable when the repetition of "Milwaukee County" is cumbersome.

All publications, letterhead, websites, signs, vehicles and other materials produced

by Milwaukee County departments and divisions must make clear they are part of Milwaukee County government — through correct use of the county seal logo and, when possible, printed text. For example, the *Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management*; the *Milwaukee County Courthouse*; the *Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division*. See **capitalization, county**. Also see the Milwaukee County Graphic Standards Reference Guide ([LINK](#)).

Milwaukee County Executive

The formal title of the county executive. Capitalize *County Executive* before a name and when used in place of the officeholder's name: *County Executive Chris Abele*, the *County Executive proposed*. Lowercase the title in other uses: *Four people are running for county executive in the primary election*. Avoid using the *Executive* alone when referring to the *County Executive*.

Milwaukee County departments & divisions

The proper way to refer to Milwaukee County departments is:

Airport
Architecture, Engineering & Environmental Services
Audit Services Division
Civil Service Commission
Clerk of Circuit Court
Community Business Development Partners (CBDP)
Courts
County Board of Supervisors
County Clerk
County Executive
Department of Administrative Services
Department on Aging
Department of Child Support Services
Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
Department of Human Resources
Department of Parks, Recreation & Culture
Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
Economic Development Division
Election Commission
Ethics Board
Facilities Management
House of Correction
Information Management Services Division (IMSD)
Medical Examiner
Office on African American Affairs
Office of the Comptroller
Office of Corporation Counsel / Corporation Counsel
Office of the County Treasurer
Office of the District Attorney
Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget
Office for Persons with Disabilities
Office of the Register of Deeds
Office of the Sheriff
Office of Veterans' Services (note that it's *Veterans'*)
Personnel Review Board
Probate
Procurement
Risk Management
Sustainability
Zoological Department

Milwaukee County facilities

633 W. Wisconsin Ave. Building
General Mitchell International Airport
Marcia P. Coggs Human Services Center
Milwaukee County Courthouse
Milwaukee County Criminal Justice Facility
Milwaukee County Grounds
Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office
Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex
Milwaukee County Safety Building
Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory — use of **The Domes** is often acceptable in most cases within Milwaukee County but should be established with a first reference such as **The Domes at Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory**
Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center (updated in February 2018 by County Board resolution to replace former "Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Center")

Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.

Do not use the courtesy titles *Miss*, *Mr.*, *Mrs.* or *Ms.* in general text. Instead, use the first and last names of the person. On second reference, use only the last name. Courtesy titles may be used in business correspondence. Plural forms of these titles: *Misses*, *Messrs.*, *Mmes.*, *Mses.* See **names**.

months

Always capitalize the names of months. Abbreviate the following months when used with a specific date: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, *Dec.* Spell out when using a month alone or with a year alone: *The task force met in August. The task force first met Jan. 16, 1994. The task force first met in August 1994.*

When using the month, day and year, set off the year with commas: *The task force first met Jan. 16, 1994, in West Allis.* See **dates**.

names

People are entitled to be known however they want to be known, if their identities are clear. In publications, use a person's full name on first reference, last name only on second reference. Don't repeat a person's title before the last name on second reference. See **capitalization; junior, senior; middle initials; Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.; nickname**.

newspapers

Capitalize all proper nouns that are part of the official title. Italicize them if possible; but do not underline them if not. Capitalize *the* in a newspaper's name if that is the publication's preferred title. Don't use quotation marks. See **composition titles**.

nickname

Use instead of a person's given name if the person prefers to be known by the nickname. When inserting a nickname into the identification of a person, use quotation marks, not parentheses. But omit the quotation marks when using a nickname without the person's real name: *Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt* but *Teddy Roosevelt*. See **names**.

noon

See **midnight, time**.

numbers

Spell out most whole numbers below 10. Use figures for 10 and above: *five, nine, 15, 650*. See **dimensions** and other cross-references below for exceptions to those guidelines.

Also, spell out *first* through *ninth* when they show sequence in time or location: *second base*, *Third Avenue*. Exceptions include county, legislative and congressional districts: *She lives in the 2nd District*. See **districts**.

In amounts more than a million — unless the exact amount is essential — round off up to two decimal points. Write out the word *million* or *billion*, and use numbers in all but casual uses: *3 million*, *85.2 billion*, *a \$6.73 million grant*, *a million bucks*. Always include the words *million*, *billion* or *trillion* when giving ranges: *The project could cost \$20 million to \$25 million*, not *\$20-\$25 million*.

If large numbers must be spelled out, use a hyphen to connect a word ending in *y* to another word. Don't use commas between the words that are part of one number: *two hundred fifty-two*.

Avoid beginning a sentence with a number. If unavoidable, spell it out. Also, spell out casual expressions: *thanks a million*, *a thousand bucks*. See **years**.

Avoid following the word for a number with a figure in parentheses for the same number. It's redundant and could be confusing. Avoid: *The contract will expire in eight (8) days*.

For exceptions and other uses, see **addresses, ages, cents, dash, dates, decimals, dimensions, distances, dollars, fractions, headlines, highway designations, hyphen, miles, percentages, ranges, ratios, room numbers, speeds, telephone numbers, temperatures, time, votes**.

For large numbers, always use commas to separate thousandths, millionths, etc. (example: 2,450,990).

office

Capitalize when part of an agency's formal name: *Office on African American Affairs*; *Office for Persons with Disabilities*; *Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget*. Lowercase all other uses: *the executive director's office*, *the attorney's office*.

online

One word in all uses.

Oxford/serial comma

We omit, per AP. See **comma**.

parentheses ()

Parentheses may be used to surround words, phrases or even whole sentences that are relatively unimportant to the main text. But they can distract the reader from your main point. If a sentence must contain incidental information, setting off the information with a pair of commas or a pair of dashes may be more effective. Also consider placing the additional information in a separate sentence — with no parentheses. See **abbreviations and acronyms, comma, dash**.

Parenthesis marks always come in twos, one opening and one closing (). Don't use one without the other, including if they're used in numbered or alphabetized lists. See **lists**.

Place a period outside a closing parenthesis if the material inside is not a sentence (*such as this fragment*). If a parenthetical sentence (*here is one example*) is part of a sentence, don't capitalize the first word or end the parenthetical sentence with a period. If the parenthetical sentence ends with a question mark or exclamation point, however, place a period after the closing parenthesis (*here's another example!*). If the material in the parentheses is an independent sentence, capitalize the first word and place the period before the closing parenthesis. (*Here is an example.*)

PDF	Abbreviation for <i>Portable Document Format</i> , a file format that allows a document to be shared among different types of computers without losing its formatting. The abbreviation is acceptable in all references. Lowercase when giving a document name: <i>newsletter.pdf</i> .
percent	<p>One word. Use a singular verb when <i>percent</i> stands alone or when a singular word follows an <i>of</i> construction: <i>Sixty-five percent is the goal. About 25 percent of the department was absent.</i> Use a plural verb when a plural word follows an <i>of</i> construction: <i>She reported that 60 percent of the councilmembers were present.</i> Use figures for percents: <i>1 percent, 2.5 percent</i> (use decimals, not fractions, or spell out the fraction: <i>three-tenths of 1 percent</i>). For a range: <i>12 to 15 percent or between 12 and 15 percent.</i> For amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal with a zero: <i>The cost of living rose 0.6 percent.</i> Do not use the symbol % in texts — always use the word <i>percent</i>. The symbol may be used in charts, tables or scientific papers.</p> <p>Consider using <i>half</i> instead of <i>50 percent</i> if you're not using the figure alongside other percentage statistics.</p>
period (.)	<p>This punctuation mark has two main purposes. It ends all sentences that are not questions or exclamations, and it's used in some abbreviations.</p> <p>Use periods to break up complicated sentences into two or more readable sentences. See sentence length.</p> <p>Use a period, not a question mark, after an indirect question: <i>He asked what the score was.</i></p> <p>Don't put a space between two initials: <i>T.S. Eliot.</i></p> <p>Use periods after numbers or letters in listing elements of a summary: <i>1. Wash the car. 2. Clean the basement.</i> Or: <i>A. Punctuate properly. B. Write simply.</i></p> <p>Periods always go inside quotation marks.</p> <p>Use only one space after a period at the end of a sentence, unless a particular type font and size needs two spaces to provide a stronger visual break.</p> <p>See abbreviations and acronyms.</p>
plain English, plain language	An approach to communication that matches the needs of the reader with your needs as a writer, resulting in effective and efficient communication. It stresses using familiar words; cutting useless words; avoiding or explaining jargon and technical words; using abbreviations and acronyms carefully; using inclusive language; writing in active voice; keeping sentences short; avoiding double negatives; using punctuation correctly; using lists; and using headings consistently.
plans, projects, programs	Capitalize the full name of programs, projects or plans adopted formally by an entity of Milwaukee County Council. Otherwise, avoid capitalizing them. Always lowercase <i>program</i> , <i>project</i> or <i>plan</i> when the word stands alone or when using only part of the formal name: <i>The project is underway.</i> Avoid interchanging the words <i>program</i> , <i>project</i> or <i>plan</i> within a text.
plurals	<p>Follow the rules below for forming words to show more than one of the things specified: For most words, add <i>s</i>: <i>boys, ships</i>. Here are guidelines for some exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add <i>es</i> to most words ending in <i>ch</i>, <i>s</i>, <i>sh</i>, <i>ss</i>, <i>x</i> and <i>z</i>: <i>buses, churches, foxes, fuzzes, glasses.</i>

- Change *is* to *es* in words ending in *is*: *parentheses*, *theses*.
- Add *es* to most words ending in *o* if a consonant precedes *o*: *echoes*, *heroes*. There are exceptions: *pianos*.
- Words with Latin roots: Change *us* to *i* in words ending in *us*: *alumnus*, *alumni*. Change words ending in *on* to *a*: *phenomenon*, *phenomena*. Add *s* in most words ending in *um*: *memorandums*, *referendums* but not *addenda*, *curricula*, *media*.
- Add *s* to compound words written as single words: *cupfuls*, *handfuls*. For compound words that use separate words or link the words with a hyphen, make the most significant word plural: *attorneys general*, *daughters-in-law*, *deputy chiefs of staff*, *assistant attorneys*.
- Do not use *'s* when referring to words as words: *His speech had too many ifs, ands and buts*.
- Don't change the spelling of proper nouns when making them plural. Add *es* to most proper names ending in *es* or *z*: *Joneses*, *Gonzalezes*, *Parkses*. Add *s* to other proper names, including most proper names ending in *y* even if preceded by a consonant: *the Carters*, *the McCoys*, *the Kennedys*. Avoid using a possessive name as a plural: *The free passes are available at four McDonald's restaurants*. Not: *The free passes are available at four McDonald's*.
- Add *s* to figures: *General Motors built the car in the 1940s*. *The Boeing Co. sold 12 more 767s*.
- To avoid confusion, add *'s* to single letters: *Dot your i's*. *She earned two A's and three B's on her report card*. Add *s* to multiple letters: *He knows his ABCs*. *They have three color TVs*.

For plurals not covered here, check your dictionary. Also see **abbreviations & acronyms**, **capitalization**, **possessives**.

possessives

Follow these rules for forming nouns and pronouns to show possession:

- Add *'s* to singular nouns not ending in *s*: *the girl's books*, *the church's needs*, *Xerox's profits*.
- Add *'s* to singular common nouns ending in *s* unless the next word begins with *s*: *the bus's engine*, *the bus' seats*, *witness's answer*, *the witness' story*.
- Use only an apostrophe for singular proper names ending in *s*: *Drakes' decision*. And add only an apostrophe to plural proper names ending in *s*: *the Parkses' home*.
- Add *'s* to plural nouns not ending in *s*: *women's rights*, *women's room*, *men's bike*, *children's passes*.
- Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in *s*: *the girls' books*, *boys' bike*, *plants' supervisors*, *families' cars*.
- When two or more people jointly possess an item, put the apostrophe after the noun closest to the item: *Eric and Phil's car* (they jointly own car), *Eric and Phil's cars* (they jointly own more than one car). But when two or more people separately possess items, put an apostrophe or an *'s* after each noun: *Eric's and Phil's cars*.
- Add only an apostrophe to nouns plural in form, singular in meaning: *mathematics' rules*, *United States' wealth*.
- Treat nouns that are the same in singular and plural as plurals, even if the meaning is singular: *the two deer's tracks*.

Many pronouns have separate forms for the possessive that don't use an apostrophe: *yours, ours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose*. Use an apostrophe with a pronoun only when the meaning calls for a contraction: *you're (you are), it's (it is)*. Follow the rules listed above in forming the possessives of other pronouns: *another's plan, others' plans, one's rights, someone else's umbrella*. See **contractions**.

Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in *s* when using the word as an adjective — describing the following noun. If the prepositions *for* or *by* would be more appropriate than the possessive *of*, do not use an apostrophe: *a radio band for citizens, citizens band radio; a guide for writers, a writers guide; a day for veterans, Veterans Day; a union for carpenters, a carpenters union*. Omit the apostrophe from *citizens committee*. Add *'s*, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in *s*: *a children's hospital*. If you're giving the proper name of an organization or other item, try to respect the style it uses — even if that style differs from these guidelines: *the Metropolitan Teacher's Association, The World-Class Speller's Guide*.

Follow the rules above for possessive words that occur in such phrases as *a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, four years' experience, your money's worth*.

prefixes

Usually, follow these rules for adding a prefix: Don't hyphenate when using a prefix with a root word that begins with a consonant. Use a hyphen if the prefix ends in a vowel and the root word that follows begins with the same vowel. When in doubt, check for specific prefixes and words in a dictionary or online style manual. Insert a hyphen if the first listing of the word includes one. If the word is not hyphenated or not listed, drop the hyphen.

In addition, use a hyphen when capitalizing the root word. And use a hyphen to join doubled prefixes: *sub-subcommittee*. At times, a hyphen is necessary for clarity of meaning: *He will reform (correct or improve) the congregation. She will re-form (change the shape of) the clay figure*.

publications

See **composition titles, magazine names, newspapers**.

punctuation

Use common sense. Punctuation should help reading — to make clear the thought being expressed. If punctuation does not help clarify the message, it should not be there.

When more than one punctuation mark (not including quotation marks, parentheses or brackets) could be used at the same location in a sentence, use only the "stronger" — or more necessary — of the two. Question marks and exclamation points, for example, are stronger than commas and periods: *"Have all the ballots been counted?" asked the reporter*. (The question mark fills the role of the comma.) *The topic of his speech is "Customer service first!"* (No period following the exclamation point.)

See entries for specific punctuation marks:

- **ampersand (&)**
- **apostrophe (')**
- **brackets []**
- **colon (:)**
- **comma (,)**
- **dash (—)**
- **ellipsis (...)**

- exclamation point (!)
- hyphen (-)
- parentheses ()
- period (.)
- question mark (?)
- quotation marks (“ ”)
- semicolon (;)
- virgule (/).

Also see **headlines**, **sentence length**.

quarter

Lowercase *fall*, *winter*, *spring* and *summer* when referring to academic quarters and *first*, *second*, *third* and *fourth* quarters when referring to fiscal periods. Don't separate the quarter and the year with a comma: *She plans to graduate at the end of fall quarter 2001. The report is scheduled to come out in spring quarter 2001.*

question mark (?)

Direct questions always take question marks: *Who is going with you? Did he ask you if you were going?* Indirect questions never take question marks: *He would like to know who's going with you.* For multiple questions, either use a single question mark at the end of the complete sentence: *Did she plan the project, manage the budget and supervise the staff?* Or emphasize each element by breaking up the sentence: *Did she plan the project? Manage the budget? Supervise the staff?*

Use a question mark and not a comma when supplying attribution for a quotation: *"Who is going?" she asked.* The question mark may go inside or outside quotation marks depending on the meaning: *Who wrote "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey"?* *She asked, "How long will it take?"* Also, use a single question mark, inside the quotation mark, in sentences like this: *Did you hear him say, "Who wrote all the reports?"* See **punctuation**.

quotations

Introduce full-sentence quotations with commas. Introduce multiple-sentence quotations with colons. When using partial quotations and the titles of books, movies and other publications, punctuate as if the quotation marks weren't there. See **colon**, **comma**, **composition titles** and **quotation marks**.

quotation marks (“ ”)

Put quotation marks around direct quotations: *"No comment," he said. Smith said, "Report to work on time."* If a full paragraph of quoted material precedes another paragraph that continues the quotation, do not put quotation marks after the first paragraph. But do put quotation marks before the second paragraph.

Put quotation marks around words used ironically or unfamiliar terms used on first reference: *The "tycoon" turned out to be a pauper.* But avoid overusing single words in quotation marks.

Don't put the words of one person into the mouths of many: *Witnesses at the accident said there was "a tremendous bang, and then all hell broke loose."*

Quotations within quotations: Use single quotation marks for passages contained within a direct quotation (*"She said, 'Ouch!'"*).

Punctuation: The period and comma always go inside the quotation marks. The dash, question mark and exclamation point go inside the quotation marks when they apply to only the quoted matter. Colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks. Also see **punctuation**, **question mark**.

In headlines, use single quotation marks: *Man cries 'Fire!' in theater, causes panic*
See **composition titles, nickname**.

race

Identify a person's race (or nationality) only when it is pertinent. When an ethnic reference is needed to identify U.S. citizens, don't hyphenate terms when used as nouns: *an African American, a Chinese American, Italian Americans*. But hyphenate the terms when used as adjectives: *a Mexican-American agency*.

Be aware of stereotyping words, images and situations that suggest all or most members of a racial or ethnic group are the same.

Avoid using qualifiers that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes. Avoid using ethnic clichés.

Be aware of possible negative connotations of color-symbolic words: *a black reputation, yellow coward*.

Be aware of language that might have questionable racial or ethnic connotations: *Culturally disadvantaged* implies superiority of one culture over another.

Avoid patronizing and tokenism toward racial or ethnic groups. But make sure content represents all groups fairly — in articles and photographs.

ranges

Use the form: *\$33 million to \$40 million*. Not: *\$33 to \$40 million*, unless you're referring to *33 dollars*. In general, use *to* rather than a dash in general text. However, a dash might be optimal in a table or chart if used consistently.

ratios

Use numerals and hyphens: *The ratio was 4-to-1. A ration of 2-to-1, a 2-1 ratio, 1 in 4 voters*. As illustrated, the word *to* should be omitted when the numbers precede the word *ratio*.

Use the word *ratio* or a phrase such as *a 2-1 majority* to avoid confusion with actual figures.

river

Capitalize as part of a proper name: *Milwaukee River, Kinnickinnic River*. Lowercase in other uses: *the river, the Mississippi and Missouri rivers*.

road

Capitalize when part of a formal name. Lowercase when used alone or with two or more names. Do not abbreviate: *We drove down Watertown Plank Road. The crew will pave Altamont and Loomis roads*. See **addresses, highway designations**.

room & suite numbers

Use numerals and capitalize *Room* and *Suite* when used with a numeral: *Room 9, Room 123, Suite 16, Conference Room 9B*.

rooms

Capitalize the names of specially designated rooms: *Rainier Room*. But *fifth floor conference room*.

seasons

Lowercase *summer, fall, winter* and *spring*. Don't separate the season and the year with a comma: *The report is scheduled to come out in summer 2019*.

semicolon (;)

The semicolon has three common uses. Sometimes called a "supercomma," the semicolon shows a greater separation of thought and information than a comma but less separation than a period. Instead of using a semicolon as described in the

second and third guidelines below, breaking a long sentence into two or more shorter sentences (and omitting the semicolon) can aid readability and clarity.

First, use semicolons to separate parts of a series when at least one item in the series also contains a comma. A semicolon also goes before the final *and* in such a series: *Attending were Tina Lopez, 223 Main St.; Ron Larson, 1414 Broadway; and Robert Zimmerman, 1976 E. Pine St.*

Second, use a semicolon to link two (or more) closely related statements that could stand alone as independent sentences (or clauses): *The train arrived on time; the passengers were overjoyed.* If a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but* or *or* separates the two independent clauses, a comma would replace the semicolon: *The train arrived on time, and the passengers were overjoyed.*

Third, use a semicolon between two independent clauses when the second clause begins with transition words such as *therefore*, *however*, *consequently* and *for example*: *The department had planned to discontinue the service; however, overwhelming customer demand persuaded officials to keep it.*

Place semicolons outside quotation marks.

sentence length

Varying sentence length makes writing more interesting. Short sentences, 10 to 15 words or less, are good for emphatic, memorable statements. Longer sentences, no more than about 30 words, are good for detailed explanation and support. Try to include only one idea in a sentence, with an average length of 20 to 25 words. See **lists**, **period**.

sex, sexism

Base communication on pertinent qualities of men and women, not on their gender.

Avoid use of words that restrict use or meaning to males. Include all people in general references by substituting asexual words and phrases: *informal agreement* for *gentlemen's agreement*, *homemaker* for *housewife*, *employees and their spouses* for *employees and their wives*.

Here are other examples: *hours worked*, *staff hours* or *working hours* for *man-hours*; *people*, *human beings*, *the human race* or *humanity* for *mankind*; *physical strength*, *resources*, *human effort*, *personnel*, *workers* or *work force* for *manpower*; *artificial*, *synthetic*, *manufactured* or *fabricated* for *manmade*; and *large*, *big*, *generous* or *formidable* for *man-sized*.

Avoid using *man* or *woman* as a suffix or prefix in job titles: Substitute *business executive* or *businessperson* for *businessman*; *worker*, *laborer* or *employee* for *workman*; *camera operator*, *videographer* or *cinematographer* for *cameraman*; *firefighter* for *fireman*, *letter*, *mail* or *postal carrier* for *mailman*; and *sales representative*, *agent* or *clerk* for *salesman*. Use generic titles or descriptions for both men and women.

Reword sentences to drop unnecessary gender pronouns, especially the outdated generic *he* and *his* but also *she* and *her*. Here are some alternatives:

- Try eliminating use of any pronoun.
- Substitute the articles *a* or *the* for the pronoun where appropriate.
- Use the plural pronouns *they* and *their* in reference to plural nouns: *Workers ... they*. Not *The worker ... he*. Using plural pronouns with singular nouns is not yet widely accepted: *The worker ... they*.
- Use *he* or *she* and *his* or *hers*—but don't overdo it. Alternate between using those phrases and other alternatives. See **he or she**, **he/she**; **his**, **his/her**.

- Repeat the original noun or use synonyms for second references to nouns like *the worker* or *workers*. But don't overdo that either. Make sure it's clear to readers that the synonyms refer to the same person or people.
- Alternate male and female expressions and examples. This style manual uses examples involving both males and females.

Refer to women and men equally and consistently: *Transit operators Larry Carson and Emily Johnson won the awards*. Not: *Transit operators Larry Carson and Mrs. Gus Johnson won the awards*. See **Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**

Use parallel language when referring to people by sex: Substitute *husband and wife* for *man and wife*, *ladies and gentlemen* for *ladies and men* (or *gentlemen and ladies*, for variety). Neither men nor women over the age of 18 are *boys* or *girls*. Usually, use *woman* and *man* as the noun and *female* and *male* as the adjective. *Female* and *male* are OK as nouns when talking about animals, when it's not known if a person is an adult or a child and when talking about a group that includes both adults and children.

Grant equal respect to women and men. Do not describe men by mental attributes or professional position and, simultaneously, describe women by physical attributes. Only refer to appearance, charm, intuition or physical strength when pertinent.

software

Software is a mass (or non-count) noun, like *postage*, *research*, *machinery*, *hardware*, *cash*, *advice* and *mail*. Mass nouns take singular verbs. To refer to software in countable or measurable-and plural-terms, add countable phrases or use *software* as an adjective: *Three types of software are available*. *Three software products are available*. Capitalize software titles such *Microsoft Word*, *Adobe PhotoShop* and *PowerPoint*.

space after a period

In all digital copy, use only one space after a period. (The software adds space. Adding two spaces is an unnecessary holdover from the era of typewriters.)

speeds

Use figures: *The bus was moving about 8 miles per hour*.

state names

The names of the 50 U.S. states should be spelled out when used in the body of a story, whether standing alone or in conjunction with a city, town, village or military base: *He moved to Washington after living 20 years in New York*. *The meeting will be held in Green Bay, Wisconsin*. State names may be abbreviated in charts and tables, using the standard abbreviations below.

No state name is necessary if the city is the same as the dateline or is a "dateline city," a city so well known to be connected to its state that naming the state is unnecessary (for example: *Las Vegas*, *Detroit* or *Milwaukee*). See **cities & towns** for a list of dateline cities.

Do not use the two-letter ZIP code abbreviations for state names unless part of a mailing address: *For more information, write Milwaukee County Office on African American Affairs, 901 N. 9th St., Room 306, Milwaukee, WI 53233-2683*. Always spell out other uses of state names in business correspondence, webpages and direct quotations. See **ZIP code**.

For punctuation, put one comma between the city and the state names and another comma after the state name, unless ending a sentence: *She moved to Portland, Oregon, from Portland, Maine*. Do not use ZIP code spellings for state names in written text unless part of an address: *For more information, write Milwaukee County Election Commission, 901 N. 9th St., Courthouse Room G-10, Milwaukee, WI 53233*.

Avoid using the redundant *the state of* before most state names. But use *state of Washington* or *Washington state* — with lowercase *state* — when necessary to distinguish the state from the District of Columbia.

Lowercase *state* when used as an adjective: *a state map, the state flag. They visited the state of Florida.* Capitalize *state* when referring to the state government: *He worked for the State of Wisconsin.*

Don't capitalize *state* when used as an adjective to specify a level of government: *the state representative, state funds, state department of transportation.* But capitalize the full name of state governmental units: *Wisconsin Department of Transportation.* See **governmental bodies**.

Below are the standard abbreviations for state names for use in charts, tables or other rare instances. Eight states are never abbreviated: *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah*. Don't put a space between parts of an abbreviation: *N.M.*, not *N. M.*:

Ala.	Ind.	Neb.	R.I.
Alaska	Iowa	Nev.	S.C.
Ariz.	Kan.	N.C.	S.D.
Ark.	Ky.	N.D.	Tenn.
Calif.	La.	N.H.	Texas
Colo.	Maine	N.J.	Utah
Conn.	Md.	N.M.	Vt.
Del.	Mass.	N.Y.	Va.
Fla.	Mich.	Ohio	Wash.
Ga.	Minn.	Okla.	Wis.
Hawaii	Miss.	Ore.	W.Va.
Idaho	Mo.	Pa.	Wyo.
Ill.	Mont.		

street

Abbreviate only with a numbered address: *23905 S. 74th St.* See **addresses** for exceptions.

suffixes

Usually, do not hyphenate words formed with the suffixes *-wide* (*countywide* is an exception), *-down*, *-less*. If in doubt, follow your dictionary. If it does not list a word combination, use two words for the verb form and hyphenate any noun or adjective forms. See **compound words and modifiers**.

Here are some general rules:

- The suffix *-able* is more common than *-ible*, and it is used mostly with complete root words: *workable, dependable, changeable, noticeable*. The final *e* is dropped in some root words: *desirable, excusable, indispensable, usable*.
- Only *-able* follows *g*, *i* and the hard *c* ("k" sound): *navigable, amiable, irrevocable*.
- The suffix *-ible* is commonly used after double consonants (like *ll*), *s*, *st*, some *d* sounds and the soft *c* ("s" sound): *infallible, divisible, credible, forcible*.

- The *-ance/ant* and *-ence/ent* suffixes don't follow any firm rules, so use your memory or a dictionary: *attendance, maintenance, relevant, resistant; existence, independence, persistent, superintendent*.

supervisor

Capitalize as an official job or legislative title or before a name: *Central Division Supervisor Connie Tyler, Milwaukee County Supervisor Sheldon Wasserman*. Lowercase when standing alone or between commas after a name: *Keith Jagger, motor pool supervisor, thanked his crew. Sheldon Wasserman, supervisor in the district, attended*.

Acceptable to abbreviate as *Sup.* before a name when referring to a member of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. See **capitalization, titles**.

telephone numbers

Use a parentheses to separate the area code from the rest of the phone number: *(206) 937-8888, (414) 278-CALL*. Except for internal Milwaukee County publications, always use an area code. Don't use periods (or dots) instead of parentheses or hyphens.

For extension numbers, abbreviate and lowercase *extension*, and separate it with a comma from the main number: *(414) 278-1000, ext. 233*.

For toll-free numbers, it is not necessary to use parentheses. Refer to *toll-free number* instead of *800 number*: *800-123-5566 (toll free)*. (Notice the hyphenation of *toll-free number* when *toll free* is a compound modifier.)

temperatures

Except for *zero*, use numerals for all temperatures: *It's 33 degrees Fahrenheit*. In texts, use a word — not a minus sign — to show temperatures below zero: *It's 8 degrees below zero*. See **Fahrenheit**.

that, which, who, whom

That is the defining, or restrictive, pronoun for essential clauses: *The lawn mower that is broken is in the shop* (tells which one). *Which* is the nondefining, or nonrestrictive, pronoun for nonessential clauses: *The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the shop* (adds a fact about the only mower in question).

In the examples above, note the correct use of commas: *Which* clauses are always set off with commas (or sometimes dashes or parentheses), and *that* clauses aren't. Essential *that* clauses cannot be cut without changing the meaning of a sentence. Don't set off an essential clause from the rest of a sentence with commas. Nonessential *which* clauses can be dropped without changing the meaning. Set off a nonessential clause with commas.

Notice the difference between *that* and *which* in these two similar examples: *These are cuts that will affect millions. These cuts, which will affect millions, go into effect Friday*.

When an essential or nonessential clause refers to a human being or something with personal human qualities (such as a *family*), introduce it with *who* or *whom*. Do not use commas if the clause is essential to the meaning. Use them if it is not.

To/to

In headlines and titles, capitalize "To" when used as part of an infinitive from of a verb. Do not capitalize when used as a preposition.

New Program To Serve Hundreds of People Will Launch in May
New Program Will Provide Food to Hundreds of People

time

Lowercase and use periods for *a.m.*, *p.m.* Use numerals except for *noon* and *midnight*. Do not put a 12 in front of *noon* or *midnight*. Don't use *12 p.m.* or *12 a.m.*

(In Latin, these abbreviations stand for *ante meridiem*, “before noon,” and *post meridiem*, “afternoon.”)

Times on the hour do not take zeros (so, never *10:00 a.m.*). Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *1:30 p.m.* Here’s the style for giving ranges of time: *The hours are 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.* (or *8:30 to 10 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.*).

Avoid redundancies like *11 a.m. this morning* or *11:30 p.m. Tuesday night*. Instead, use *11:30 a.m. today*, *11:30 p.m. Tuesday*. The wording *3 o’clock in the afternoon* is acceptable but wordy.

See **dates**.

titles

Abbreviate these position titles when using them before a full name outside direct quotations: *Dr.*, *Gov.*, *Lt. Gov.*, *Sup.*, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Rep.*, *Sen.*, *the Rev.* Spell out all except *Dr.*, *Mr.*, *Ms.* and *Mrs.* when using them before a name in direct quotations. See **academic degrees, titles; legislative titles; Miss, Mr., Mrs., Ms.**

Capitalize job titles used directly before a person’s name: *Treatment Plant Operator George McCartney*, *Environmental Planner Paul Starkey*.

Except for business correspondence when referring to specific individuals, lowercase and spell out job titles when they are used alone or follow a person’s name: *Sue Chin*, *transportation planner*, *spoke at the meeting*. *The transportation planner spoke at the meeting*.

If a title applies to only one person in an organization, include the word *the* if the title is between commas: *The county executive, Chris Abele, addressed the convention*. Or *Chris Abele, the county executive, addressed the convention*. Use this construction to set off a long title from a name: *Tina Chin, the manager of the long-range service planning project, said...*

See **capitalization, Milwaukee County Executive**.

trademark

Unless a company’s trademark name is essential to an article, use a generic equivalent: *facial tissue* instead of *Kleenex*, *photocopy* instead of *Xerox*, *cola* instead of *Coke*. When using a trademark or proper name of a product, capitalize the first letter of each word. Don’t capitalize every letter unless the word is an acronym or abbreviation. Use of the trademark and registration symbols — TM and [®] — is unnecessary in general body text, unless certain commercial products are named in advertising materials.

underlining

Avoid underlining text in publications and on the internet to emphasize words and phrases. Instead, use other options, including italics, boldface, color and size. Underlining cuts through the tails of several letters and punctuation marks — the comma, semicolon and letters g j p q y — making them harder to read. Also, people expect underlined text to be a hyperlink. Underlining website addresses in publications is generally unnecessary and distracting.

United States

When abbreviating as an adjective or noun, include periods: *U.S.* No space between the letters in the abbreviation. However, in headlines, it’s *US* (no periods).

verbs

Use a singular verb form after *each, either, everyone, everybody, neither, nobody, no one, someone, somebody*: *Although both routes serve the area, neither serves the National Avenue park-and-ride lot. Everyone at the meeting wants to speak.*

Use a plural verb when the word *and* joins two or more nouns in a compound subject. Exceptions to this rule include compound subjects qualified by *each* or *every* and certain compounds, often clichés: *Every window and mirror on the truck was broken. Give and take is essential to good communication.*

A singular subject takes singular verbs even if it is connected to other nouns by *with, as well as, in addition to, except, together with* and *no less than*: *The plant manager, as well as her supervisors, is involved in the training.*

virgule (/)

Avoid using the virgule — also called a *slash, forward slash, diagonal* or *slant* — to represent omitted words or letters. Examples include *per* in *40,000 tons/year*, *to* in *price/earnings ratio*, or in *his/her* and *oral/written tests*, *versus* in *parent/child issues*, *with* in *table/mirror*, *w/o* for *without* and *c/o* for *in care of*. Also, avoid using virgules (or hyphens) with numerals to give dates, especially if your readers could confuse the order of the day and month: *2/11/94, 11-16-1993*.

The virgule may replace *and* in some compound terms: *the Milwaukee/Waukesha County region, the May/June issue, an innovative classroom/laboratory*. Using *and*, however, may be less ambiguous. When using the virgule, don't separate the punctuation mark from adjacent words or numbers with spaces.

The virgule may be used to separate the numerator from the denominator in numbers containing fractions. See **fractions**.

Use the virgule — or forward slash — in Internet addresses:
<http://www.county.milwaukee.gov/careers>.

voicemail

One word, per AP (rule modified from former preference for two words in 2016). *He left me a voicemail. Thirty people left voicemail messages about the project.*

votes

Use numerals and a hyphen for pairs of votes: *The council voted 10-3 for the project*. Spell out numbers under 10 in other uses: *The proponents won by a seven-vote margin*.

World Wide Web, the web, website

If the context is clear, *the web* is acceptable on first reference. Do not capitalize *web* (this is a relatively recent update to AP Style, so correct inconsistent usage on older documents as you revise them). Also, *web address* and *web browser* (two words), but *webpage, webmaster, webcam, and website*. Use *website*, not *webpage*, when referring to a site with more than one page. Also see **email, home page, internet, intranet**.

Refer to a web address as a *web address* or *URL* (but never *Uniform Resource Locator*). Use the spelling and capitalization of the website owner. Instead of ending a sentence with a web address and then a period, consider separating the address and the period with a phrase like *on the web* after the address:
visit www.county.milwaukee.gov on the web.

If an address breaks between lines, split it before a slash or a dot (a *period*) that is part of the address; don't insert a hyphen unless a hyphen is part of the address.

Here's the recommended style for Web addresses:

www.county.milwaukee.gov/careers (with no *http://* before the web address).

Special typographical treatments — such as color or boldfacing — are optional, as are brackets or dashes that separate Web addresses (and email addresses) from other text and punctuation. See **underlining**.

years

Use numerals without commas: *In 2003, a severe flood hit the region.* Use an *s* and no apostrophe to show spans of decades or centuries, but use an apostrophe at the start of a year when omitting the first two numbers: *1990s, 1900s, '68, '60s.*

Years are the one exception to the rule against beginning a sentence with numerals: *1994 was one of his best years.* See **dates, numbers**.

zero, zeros

Don't include unnecessary zeros in times and dollar amounts: *10 a.m., \$35* (not *10:00 a.m., \$35.00*). See **cents, time**.

ZIP code

Use all caps for the abbreviation for *Zone Improvement Program*, but always lowercase the word *code*. Abbreviation acceptable in all uses.

Use ZIP codes and ZIP code abbreviations for states **only in mailing addresses**. Do not use ZIP codes in street addresses to show the location of a building, facility, meeting or event. See **state names** for standard abbreviations in other uses.

Put only one space between the state abbreviation and ZIP code (even though you would use two spaces in correspondence). Do not put a comma between the state name and the ZIP code.

Below are the approved ZIP code abbreviations:

Alabama (AL)	Louisiana (LA)	Ohio (OH)
Alaska (AK)	Maine (ME)	Oklahoma (OK)
Arizona (AZ)	Maryland (MD)	Oregon (OR)
Arkansas (AR)	Massachusetts (MA)	Pennsylvania (PA)
California (CA)	Michigan (MI)	Rhode Island (RI)
Colorado (CO)	Minnesota (MN)	South Carolina (SC)
Connecticut (CT)	Mississippi (MS)	South Dakota (SD)
Delaware (DE)	Missouri (MO)	Tennessee (TN)
Florida (FL)	Montana (MT)	Texas (TX)
Georgia (GA)	Nebraska (NE)	Utah (UT)
Hawaii (HI)	Nevada (NV)	Vermont (VT)
Idaho (ID)	North Carolina (NC)	Virginia (VA)
Illinois (IL)	North Dakota (ND)	Washington (WA)
Indiana (IN)	New Hampshire (NH)	Wisconsin (WI)
Iowa (IA)	New Jersey (NJ)	West Virginia (WV)
Kansas (KS)	New Mexico (NM)	Wyoming (WY)
Kentucky (KY)	New York (NY)	

Version 1.0 DRAFT

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The Editorial Style Guide has been released in DRAFT version.

A review process is currently underway and updates and modifications will be made. If you see any discrepancies or areas of confusion within the DRAFT, please contact Graphic Communications Coordinator Jim Lautenbach at (414) 278-5092 or jim.lautenbach@milwaukeecountywi.gov.